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Forest Service NEWS



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FEATURE

BETTER USE OF FOREST RESOURCES VITAL TO FOREST INDUSTRY

In view of the difficult economic conditions faced by the Pacific Northwest forest industries, accelerated efforts to achieve better utilization of forest resources is vital to long-term survival in the industry. This is the opinion of Charles Krebs, regional director of cooperative forestry in the USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Region.

Conservation always has been a prime consideration with the Forest Service but now, maximizing returns from natural resources is equally important, Krebs says. He points out that of the 24.5 million acres of National Forests in Oregon and Washington, only 15.6 million, or 60 percent, are judged suitable for timber production by today's standards. Scenic, wildlife, or other resource considerations may further reduce the area available for intensive timber management. Hence, efforts to achieve the best possible utilization of the remaining timber base is paramount.

To extend current supplies, a program to achieve better utilization of the timber resource is being conducted jointly by federal and state forestry departments and involves activities in both the forests and the mills. Personnel from state and federal agencies conduct on-site analyses and training programs as a means of demonstrating and quantifying improved cutting methods that increase the wood fiber realized. As an example, loss through breakage as a result of improper cutting has been a continuing waste factor, Krebs said.

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Timber purchasers are able to realize more wood volume, particularly in the number of preferred length logs which are worth more money, as a result of improved cutting practices. This increases profitability.

The Forest Service has a selfish motive also, inasmuch as buyers of federal timber sales usually pay only for the footage hauled out of the woods. Improved utilization thus means greater revenue to the U.S. Treasury, which is shared with local governments. In addition, there is less residue to be disposed of and fewer acres to be harvested to meet current demands.

Improved utilization in the mill, Krebs said, is equally as important as in the forest. Raw material (logs) represents between 60 and 70 percent of mill costs, making industry acutely aware of the need to optimize recovery. The Forest Service assists mill operators by providing a program which involves measuring logs in the mill yard, following them through the manufacturing process and then measuring the volume actually realized. The mill is then provided information which quantifies their recovery ability and shows them opportunities to improve. Krebs explained that, on the average, volume recovered in the mills has been about 5 percent short of optimum, based on input. In some instances the opportunities for improving manufacturing methods was found to be as high as 25 percent.

This program, Krebs added, serves the public through greater conservation and the industry through a reduction in raw material cost.

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